

Testimony for Raised Bill No. 5301
An Act Concerning Opioid Prescriptions Issued to Minors

I am Sandi Carbonari, a primary care pediatrician and immediate past president of the CT Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. I am writing in opposition to Raised Bill No. 5301, "An Act Concerning Opioid Prescriptions Issued to Minors". We share your concern about the growing opioid abuse epidemic in our state and applaud your efforts address it.

However, this bill, as written, does not target the major source of opioid prescriptions written for children. Well over 90% of these prescriptions are written in Emergency Departments, Outpatient Surgical Centers, Hospitals, and Urgent Care Centers. These facilities are all exempted in this bill. There are few conditions for which opioids would be prescribed by primary care pediatricians and pediatric subspecialists, other than those specializing in pain management or hematology/oncology, in the office setting.

Too often, large amounts of opioid pain analgesics are prescribed for relatively short term episodes of pain. This results in a large number of pills in a lot of medicine cabinets. The primary sources of the prescription opioids used by adolescents for non-medical purposes are from a friend or a relative. Much of these medications are left over from legally obtained prescriptions and then diverted either purposefully or unintentionally.

Most of the measures outlined in the bill are not specific to minors. Assessment of history of substance abuse, current similar medications being taken by the patient, discussion of the risks of addiction and overdose associated with opioid analgesics, and the dangers of taking these medications with alcohol or other central nervous system depressants are all extremely important for patients of any age. In fact, many more prescriptions for opioid analgesics are written for adults than for children and adolescents.

Pediatricians are very concerned about the epidemic of abuse of prescription medications; in fact, this was the subject of our annual meeting this year. Although we oppose this bill, we hope that we can work with the Committee on Children to develop better strategies to address this serious problem.

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